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Security Council

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Letter dated 21 November 2003 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Please find attached the assessment of the work of the Security Council during the presidency of the Syrian Arab Republic in August 2003 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Fayssal **Mekdad**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 21 November 2003 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Assessment of the work of the Security Council during the presidency of the Syrian Arab Republic (August 2003)

During the Syrian Arab Republic's presidency of the Security Council in August, the Council held seven formal meetings and six public meetings. Its members met on 11 occasions for consultations.

In August the Council adopted seven resolutions and issued two presidential statements and the President was authorized on nine occasions to make statements to the press on behalf of the Council members.

Africa

Burundi

At a session of informal consultations held on 14 August, the Security Council heard a briefing by the Secretariat on recent developments in Burundi in which condemnation of the recent acts of violence was stressed. Also emphasized during the session was the condemnation of the conscription of children and their use in military actions. The members of the Council affirmed their support for the peace process and the Arusha Agreement signed on 28 August 2000 and called upon the parties in Burundi to abide by the commitments undertaken by them at the Dar es Salaam meeting on 20 July 2003. They reaffirmed their support for the African mission deployed in Burundi by the African Union and appealed once again to donors capable of providing material and logistic support for that mission. The Council members further expressed their concern over the humanitarian situation in Burundi, calling on all parties, including the Government, to help enable humanitarian aid and humanitarian agencies to reach populations in need. The Council welcomed the resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Council on 17 July 2003 whereby the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Burundi was created within the framework of a mechanism for African States emerging from conflict.

During the discussions the Council issued a statement to the press that included all the elements referred to above as well as other aspects relating to the situation in Burundi.

Côte d'Ivoire

On 4 August the Security Council held a formal meeting on the situation in Côte d'Ivoire at which it unanimously adopted resolution 1498 (2003), whereby it extended for the next six months the authorization given to member States participating in the forces of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), together with French Forces supporting them, to monitor the maintenance of peace and security in Côte d'Ivoire and ensure the implementation of the peace agreement signed by the various parties in Côte d'Ivoire.

In informal consultations on the situation in Côte d'Ivoire, held on 20 August, the Council heard a briefing by the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs,

Tuliameni Kalomoh. Mr. Kalomoh introduced the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (MINUCI) and gave a briefing on the latest developments in that country and the progress made by the parties concerned and the Government of national reconciliation in implementing the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

On 13 August the Security Council held a formal meeting on the work of the Expert Panel on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, at which it unanimously adopted resolution 1499 (2003) extending the Panel's mandate for three months, to 31 October 2003, to enable it to complete the remaining components of the mandate. The Council requested the Panel to submit its final report upon the termination of its mandate, i.e., by 31 October 2003.

At a session of informal consultations held on 18 August, the Council was briefed by the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Hédi Annabi, who updated the Council members on the latest developments in the Congolese regions still suffering from clashes and tensions, especially the eastern regions of the country, in particular the Ituri district, North and South Kivu provinces and Bunia. The need to support the process of peace and national reconciliation through the United Nations mission was emphasized during the session.

At its formal meeting on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, held on 26 August, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 1501 (2003), whereby it decided to transfer authority from the Interim Emergency Multinational Force to the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) during the period from 1 to 15 September 2003.

Guinea-Bissau

The Council held consultations on 4 August 2003 at which it heard a briefing presented by the Representative of the Secretary-General in Guinea-Bissau, David Stephen, on the latest developments in that country following the visit by the joint mission of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council at the end of June 2003. The President issued a statement to the press which mentioned the Council's encouragement of the President of the Government of Guinea-Bissau to hold transparent, fair and credible legislative elections and expressed the Council's concern over the grave economic situation there, appealing to the international community to continue to offer assistance.

Liberia

On 1 August 2003, at the request of the delegation of the United States of America, the Security Council held consultations on the situation in Liberia for the purpose of conferring on a draft resolution proposed by the United States delegation on the establishment of a multinational force in Liberia. The purpose of the force would be to support the implementation of the ceasefire of 17 June 2003, prepare the conditions for the initial stages of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration activities and help ensure stability and security in the period following the departure of the country's current President.

On the same day, the Council held a formal meeting at which it adopted resolution 1497 (2003) authorizing Member States to establish a multinational force in Liberia.

In a consultation session held on 26 August 2003 the Council was briefed by the Chairman of the Sanctions Committee established pursuant to resolution 1343 (2001), concerning Liberia, on the Committee's deliberations on the reports of the Secretary-General and the panel of experts on the potential humanitarian, economic and social impact of sanctions. During the same session the members of the Council heard a briefing presented by Assistant Secretary-General Hédi Annabi on the situation in Liberia and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed at Accra on 18 August 2003.

On 27 August 2003 the Council held a formal meeting attended by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ghana and current Chairman of ECOWAS, Nana Akufo-Addo; the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire, Bamba Mamadou; the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nigeria, Oluyemi Adeniji; the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Guinea, François Fall; and the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, Mohamed Ibn Chambas. At the meeting the Council heard two briefings, one by the current Chairman of ECOWAS and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ghana and the other by the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS. Following the two briefings, the President of the Council, on the basis of prior consultations among its members, issued a presidential statement (S/PRST/2003/14) in which the Council welcomed the briefings presented by the representatives of ECOWAS. The Council also welcomed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement reached by the Liberian parties at Accra on 18 August 2001 and subsequently. In accordance with the understanding reached by the Council in its preceding consultations, members of the Council held a private meeting with a delegation from ECOWAS during which the Council members addressed their questions and comments to the members of ECOWAS, who in turn replied.

Libya

On 15 August 2003 the President of the Security Council received a letter addressed to him by the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya to the United Nations. On the same date, the President received a letter from the Permanent Representatives of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America to the United Nations.

On 20 August 2003, under "Other matters", the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom presented a draft resolution, of which Bulgaria had also become a sponsor, for the lifting of the sanctions imposed on Libya. During the deliberations by the Council, no member objected to the content of the draft resolution; the delegation of France, however, requested more time. At the end of the meeting, the Council assented to the request of the Permanent Representatives of the United Kingdom and France to pursue bilateral communications between them in that regard and return to the Council on the earliest possible occasion in order to fix a date for steps to be taken in respect of the draft resolution.

Somalia

In closed consultations held on 20 August 2003, the Security Council was briefed by the Chairman of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 751 (1992) concerning Somalia on the mid-term report of the Panel of Experts established to investigate violations of the embargo imposed on Somalia, which had been submitted to the Committee at its meeting held on 13 August.

The Chairman of the Committee also gave a presentation of the preparations currently under way for a mission by the Committee to Somalia and the neighbouring countries, which was to take place from 5 to 18 October and would be led by the Chairman. Members of the Council made statements concerning the content of the briefing, the importance of compliance with the arms embargo imposed on Somalia and the importance of strengthening it and making it more effective. They also stressed the significance of the Committee's visit to the region as a sign of the importance which the Security Council attaches to requiring compliance with its resolutions. The members of the Council authorized the President to issue to the press a statement emphasizing that the Council welcomed the work so far undertaken by the Panel of Experts and stressing the importance of that work in supporting the process of peace and reconciliation in Somalia. The statement should also renew the expression of concern of the members of the Council over the continued flow of arms into Somalia; emphasize the responsibility of all Member States for the full implementation of the arms embargo against Somalia; reaffirm the cooperation of all the countries concerned with the Panel of Experts; state that the members of the Council welcomed the working relationship established between the Panel of Experts and international and regional organizations, especially the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD); and mention that the members of the Council welcomed the decision of the Chairman of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 751 (1992) to lead a Committee mission to the region in October in order to show that the Security Council was determined to implement the arms embargo fully. The Council members emphasized the need to launch an effective media campaign to make the objectives of the mission widely known before its visit.

Asia

Afghanistan

On 8 August 2003 the Council heard a briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, at a consultation session during which he introduced the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security and a description of the efforts being made by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in the political, economic, humanitarian and security fields. The Special Representative expressed deep concern over the security situation in the country, despite the progress made in rebuilding the national army and the police, and emphasized that their constitution and their strength did not yet permit the achievement of security in Afghanistan. He reviewed various aspects of the progress made in the constitutional process and the preparatory work for national elections, as well as the reconstruction programmes, the improvement of the human rights situation and programmes to combat drugs.

The members of the Council shared the Special Representative's concern over the security situation and other matters that constituted challenges to the peace process in Afghanistan. They underscored the importance of the international community's continued strong commitment to support for efforts to achieve security and peace in the country and the importance of engaging in a dialogue with all parties and drawing them into the political sphere so as to move forward with the strengthening of the political process. The members of the Council stressed the importance of continued participation by the international community in reconstruction tasks and of donors honouring the financial pledges and commitments they had made.

Bougainville

On 6 August 2003 the Security Council held a private meeting on the situation in Bougainville for the purpose of hearing the report of the Head of the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville, Noel Sinclair. Mr. Sinclair reviewed the urgent steps needed for strengthening peace in Bougainville, one of the most important of which was completing the second phase of the weapons disposal process and anticipating the third phase of that process. He also mentioned the preparations in progress for self-government, including the preparation of a Bougainville constitution, law and justice aspects and the Interim Joint Supervisory Body that would be responsible for the implementation of the agreements on the establishment of the autonomous Government and administration of Bougainville.

Mr. Sinclair stated that the Office, during the remaining months of its mandate, would continue the work of ensuring that the political process moved forward. He expressed his pleasure at the fact that the process had the cooperation and support of the recently established Bougainville Transitional Team (BTT) (Australia, Vanuatu, Fiji, New Zealand), which would be the successor of the Regional Peace Monitoring Group (PMG) whose mission had ended on 30 June 2003. He emphasized that there was a special responsibility that would be transferred at the end of the year, upon the removal of the United Nations Political Office, to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which related to the provision of continued international support to the efforts to consolidate peace in Bougainville.

The Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea, taking the floor after the Head of the Political Office, touched upon three problems, namely: verification of the implementation of the weapons collection and disposal plan; regional support for the peace process; support in preparing for self-government, reform and development. He emphasized that the peace process in Bougainville remained a national priority for Papua New Guinea; his Government was grateful for the support still being offered by the international community and would make, in exchange, every effort to ensure the achievement of lasting peace by pacific means.

The Council members who spoke during the meeting expressed their satisfaction at the completion of the second phase of the weapons collection plan. They welcomed the additional regional participation on the part of Australia, New Zealand, Vanuatu and Fiji through the Bougainville Transitional Team. They also expressed their satisfaction at the progress made in the peace process and the constitutional phase, which was moving forward.

The Permanent Representatives of Fiji, Australia, New Zealand and Japan also spoke of developments relating to peace in Bougainville and reaffirmed their

readiness to provide more of the assistance needed for the peace process on the island.

Iraq

At a formal meeting held on 14 August 2003 the Security Council adopted resolution 1500 (2003), by which it decided to establish the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq.

On 21 August 2003 the Council, in a public meeting, heard information briefings by the representatives of the United States of America and the United Kingdom in accordance with resolution 1483 (2003). In their briefings they reviewed the efforts made and the activities carried out by the coalition in Iraq in all political, economic and security areas as well as in the sphere of humanitarian activities.

The atmosphere of sadness that had enveloped the United Nations and the Security Council in the wake of the terrorist attack that had destroyed the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad, resulting in the deaths of a number of innocent persons, among them the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Sergio Vieira de Mello, had largely monopolized the statements of Council members. Indeed, in those statements they had stressed condemnation of the terrorist attack, the importance of providing for the protection of the staffs of the United Nations and other international organizations and the security of the Iraqi people. They had expressed their desire for a stronger, more active role of the United Nations in Iraq and for enabling Iraq to regain its sovereignty as quickly as possible.

The Council then proceeded to hold closed consultations in order to complete its discussion of the situation in Iraq.

On 26 August 2003 the Council held a session of closed consultations on the situation between Iraq and Kuwait, at which it discussed the report of the Secretary-General on Kuwaiti and third-State national prisoners and missing persons. The report was introduced by the high-level Coordinator, Yuli Vorontsov, who spoke of the efforts made within the framework of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Technical Subcommittee and the resulting discovery of the remains of a number of Kuwaiti missing persons. He affirmed that he would continue to step up his efforts with the parties concerned towards the discovery of more remains of missing persons and close the file in accordance with the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report.

Following the consultations, the President of the Council issued a statement to the press condemning the grave human rights violations involved in the killing of Kuwaiti nationals and nationals of third-party countries by the former Iraqi regime, in contempt for the rules of international law. He informed the Council members of the recommendation of the Secretary-General that the next report, to be issued in December 2003, should be the final report. Members expressed their hope that all pending questions would be resolved in that regard.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

On 19 August 2003 the Security Council held a public meeting at which it heard the monthly briefing on the Middle East, presented by the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Danilo Türk. Speaking about developments in the Middle East since the previous briefing, Mr. Türk drew attention to steps connected with the implementation of the road map and the challenges which still needed to be met by the parties in order to arrive at a two-State solution to the struggle in which Palestine and Israel would live side by side in peace and security.

The Assistant Secretary-General also touched upon the situation in Lebanon. He communicated the Secretary-General's concern over developments along the Blue Line and his plea to all parties to refrain from any acts that would escalate tensions.

The Council then proceeded to hold consultations on the situation in the Middle East. Council members stated the positions of their States regarding current developments in the Middle East. Many speakers emphasized the importance of making every possible effort to calm the situation in the region and the need to achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting peace.

Europe and the Balkans

Kosovo

At a public meeting held by the Security Council on 18 August 2003 on the situation in Kosovo, the Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia and President of the Coordinating Body for Kosovo, Nebojsa Covic, delivered a statement on the latest developments in the situation in Kosovo. He began by speaking of the heinous crime that had been committed in Kosovo, resulting in the killing and wounding of children, and said that Serbia was determined to cooperate with the international community in Kosovo and the Balkan region to build a model for the spread of peace and reconciliation. He outlined a number of urgent requirements for normalizing the situation in Kosovo, such as the need to implement resolution 1244 (1999); to create a mutually tolerant, multi-ethnic society with a strong economic base and successful transitional democratic institutions; to maintain the present volume of peacekeeping forces in Kosovo and provide them with better guidance in order to enable them to deal with terrorism and organized crime; to implement the disarmament of all Kosovo nationals actively and completely; to bring the perpetrators of war crimes before the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia; to urge the Albanian political leaders in Kosovo to put into operation their official backing for returnees; to impart a democratic character to society; to establish the rule of law; and to ensure reconciliation among ethnically different communities by providing the necessary assistance to all nationals without discrimination.

Council members expressed their condemnation of the criminal act perpetrated in Kosovo on 13 August 2003, welcomed the rapid response of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in investigating the crime and stressed the need to bring the perpetrators of such criminal acts to justice. They also emphasized the need to start the direct dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade on practical matters of concern to both parties, to guarantee the safe return of refugees

and internally displaced persons and to provide adequate means for establishing the rule of law with a view to creating a democratic, multi-ethnic society in Kosovo. Members of the Council welcomed the appointment of Harri Holkeri as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo and expressed their support to him for the successful completion of his mandate.

The members of the Council had agreed, following consultations on 14 August 2003, on the issuance of a statement to the press in which they expressed their condemnation of the crime committed in Kosovo and their condolences to the families of the victims. Members further demanded that no effort be spared to apprehend the perpetrators of the criminal act and bring them to justice.

Threats to international peace and security

The Council held a meeting on 20 August 2003 to adopt a presidential statement on the terrorist attack committed against the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad, which took the lives of a number of Iraqis and United Nations staff members, including the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Iraq, Sergio Vieira de Mello.

Protection of United Nations personnel, associated personnel and humanitarian personnel in conflict zones

The delegation of Mexico had presented a draft resolution on the protection of United Nations personnel on 30 May 2003, prepared during prior negotiations over which that delegation had presided. The draft had been submitted in document S/2003/581. Following negotiations lasting approximately four months, the Security Council, on 26 August 2003, adopted resolution 1502 (2003) on that subject.

In view of the importance of this item, the Secretary-General attended the meeting at which the resolution was adopted, delivering, prior to the adoption of the draft, a statement in which he emphasized the need for the Security Council to adopt it unanimously. He expressed his regret at the growing number of attacks in recent years against persons working in the humanitarian field, especially the tragic recent attack in Baghdad.

International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia

At a special meeting held on 8 August 2003, the Security Council heard a briefing by the Prosecutor for the Tribunals for Rwanda and the Former Yugoslavia, Carla Del Ponte, who informed the Council about the working mechanism of the two tribunals and the cases brought before them. She mentioned the political, legal and financial implications of the appointment of a Prosecutor for each.

The Council members then proceeded to discuss the subject in a consultation session at which Ms. Del Ponte was not present. Council members expressed their support and understanding for the Secretary-General's letter of 28 July 2003 (S/2003/766) in which he called upon the members of the Council to examine the possibility of issuing a Council resolution for the separation of the two tribunals and

the appointment of a separate Prosecutor for each one. Following lengthy deliberations, the Council ultimately adopted resolution 1503 (2003) on that subject.

Monthly wrap-up session

The Security Council held a wrap-up session on 28 August 2003 at which it discussed, on a proposal by the Syrian presidency, the topic "The role of peacekeeping activities in achieving international security and peace". The presidency circulated to States members of the Council a paper outlining the principal points that might be discussed at the session.

The Syrian Arab Republic had chosen that topic owing to the numerous developments currently taking place in United Nations peacekeeping operations. It would provide an opportunity for Council members to put forward their views on the positive results achieved by those operations and comment both on the conditions all must strive to bring about in order to eliminate the difficulties faced by peacekeeping operations and on the measures required for the protection of United Nations missions and peace processes.

In their statements, Council members underscored the importance of taking adequate measures for the protection of United Nations personnel, associated personnel and humanitarian personnel in conflict zones, and welcomed the Council's adoption of resolution 1502 (2003). Some members mentioned the need to give women a greater role by appointing more women to high-level posts in peacekeeping operations.

Delegations also drew attention to the fact that peacekeeping operations had become more complex and more extensive. Within that context, they stressed that the Secretariat should plan the work of peacekeeping missions, study what is taking place on the ground and analyse available resources. It should then transmit the resulting information to the Security Council in order to enable the Council to adopt clear, realistic mandates for peacekeeping operations. Some delegations also spoke of the importance of the role of regional organizations in bringing about international security and peace. They emphasized the need to furnish those organizations with the necessary resources and political support to enable them to fulfil the tasks entrusted to them.

Some delegates stressed the need to strengthen consultation between the Security Council, the Secretariat and troop-contributing States in the fields of planning, preparation and organization of missions in accordance with Security Council resolution 1353 (2001).